

THE BEACON HILL SOCIETY

Minutes of the Meeting held 7.30pm on Monday 29th November 2010 at the Waggon & Horses, Beacon Hill, Shepton Mallet.

Present: Julian Back, Peter Banks (Secretary), Eileen Bird, Jon Burgess (Woodland Trust), Gloria Cawood (Mendip), Caroline Gentinetta (Editor), Phillip Malcolm, Mary Newman (Treasurer), Brenda Rogers, Alan Stone (Chairman).

1. Welcome & Apologies:

Chairman Alan Stone welcomed everyone to the meeting at 7.35pm. Apologies had been received from; Peter Leach, Jennie O'Kane and Barry Pitcher.

2. Report on the previous meeting on 24th May 2010:

Peter Banks reported that the meeting on 24th May had been in two parts. Starting in the wood at 4.00pm, those present had a look at the improvement works carried out by Alan Connock on the easy going path just the day before. This now provided a firm surface to the circular route to the view-point and back. The group then accompanied Jon Burgess on a walk round the wood to see and hear what is being proposed for the Management Plan covering the coming 5 years, and members comments were invited. Jon took the opportunity to explain and discuss his plans for the thinning of certain areas over the following winter. Those present then moved down the road to the Waggon & Horses for a more formal meeting starting at 6.00pm. No further members joined the meeting at this time and Jon was thanked for his presentation and encouraged to proceed with the work he had outlined. Members were to be encouraged to come forward with ideas and suggestions for other activities to compliment the woodland work being planned.

3. Matters arising: There were no other matters arising that would not be covered later.

4. Officers Reports:

Chairman: Alan Stone had nothing to report on this occasion.

Secretary: Peter Banks regretted he had not been able to spend much time on Society affairs over the summer due to personal commitments.

Treasurer: Mary Newman updated the meeting on the current financial situation which showed a healthy balance in current and deposit accounts. Douling P.C. had yet to make its usual donation to the Society and, on describing a project to enhance an area of the parish for wildlife, the meeting unanimously expressed its desire to see such donation being used for this purpose instead.

Membership: MN confirmed that there were 22 subscribing members so far this year, plus 5 hon. members.

Editor: Caroline Gentinetta reported the next newsletter was due for circulation in the New Year, items for inclusion would always be welcome.

Webmaster: Julian Back reported the completion of a general update of the website, with new layout and links to photographs and reports on recent events.

5. Update on Society Activities:

PB reported a quiet summer on Beacon Hill, other than one occasion of litter being fly tipped. It was observed that the earlier easy going path maintenance was holding up well, though showing signs of scramble bike abuse. Gloria Cawood had made enquiries about path maintenance at Wainwrights and whilst they were happy to advise on suitable methods, they were not in a position to offer material assistance. AS reported having attended a meeting at the Science Education Centre at Wainwright's Quarry at Stoke St Michael and considered this to be a suitable place for our AGM. The meeting requested Alan to make further enquiries.

6. Archaeological Project:

PB confirmed no further archaeological investigations had been carried out this year. The Booklet 'Beacon Hill - Mendip Through the Ages' was now ready for publication and he had received a quote via Peter Leach of £824 for 500 copies or £745 for 250 copies. This was considered rather

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expensive and Alan Stone reported having obtained a quote of £513 for 1,000 copies. It was agreed to go ahead on this basis; we could expect to sell them at £1.00 per copy.

7. Beacon Hill Management:

Jon Burgess gave an update on the planned management work. The application for the necessary thinning licence had been delayed due to the Forestry Commission having to attend to urgent work concerned with an outbreak of Oak disease. However, the licence had now been received and work can proceed. Tenders have been sent out and sample tree marking carried out towards the eastern end of the wood, with trees along the roadside emphasised for safety reasons. Thinning would only be carried out on the 8 hectares of level ground at the top of the scarps and the timber sold to recover costs; this was expected to just about break even. Mainly beech are to be taken out as being a non-native species; some of the pine appeared to be dying off naturally. We can expect a fair amount of brash to be left behind but not on the pathways; the wood will look a little untidy for 6 months or so.

8. Future Events and Activities, including:

- i. **Interpretation of the management works.** JB confirmed that notices had been erected and the public will be kept informed as work progresses. Guided walks would be difficult to co-ordinate whilst work was in progress. The WT was keen to promote interpretation through the Society. The organisation of school parties was problematic due to the facilities required; this might be better arranged through the nearby Education Centre. A walk leaflet could be a useful publication if well presented.
- ii. **Litter Pick.** It was agreed that this worthwhile activity is best done once the fallen leaves have diminished but before spring growth gets underway; mid-January being a good time, weather permitting.
- iii. **Activity Weekend.** It was agreed that a summer weekend devoted to woodland skills would be attractive to visitors. Trades such as pole lathe turning, charcoal burning, could be carried out alongside an Alan Connock display. Julian Back offered to make enquiries into the availability of charcoal burners.
- iv. **Other suggestions.** Guided walks on various topics, such as fungi, etc., have been well attended by the public in the past; volunteers were required to organise events and/or lead walks.

9. Any Other Business There was no other business..

10. **Date of next meeting.** It was agreed to meet next on **Sunday 16th January 2011 at 4.00pm** in the Waggon & Horses. A litter picking session would be held beforehand in the wood, starting 2.00pm.